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Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 06722 211729Z

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 AEC-11 AID-20 CEA-02 CIAE-00

CIEP-02 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-11 FEA-02 FPC-01 H-03

INR-10 INT-08 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 OMB-01 PM-07 RSC-01

SAM-01 SCI-06 SP-03 SS-20 STR-08 TRSE-00 DRC-01 /156 W
---------- 108281
R 211417Z MAY 74
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO AMEMBASSY DACCA
INFO SECSTATE WQSHDC 1578
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG, IN, BG.
SUBJECT: ENERGY: PETROLEUM EXPLORATION: ALLOCATION BY INDIA TO US COMPANY OF POSSIBLY DISPUTED OFFSHORE AREA

REF: A) DACCA 2157 (NOTAL; B) NEW DELHI 4879, APRIL 26, 1973; C) NEW DELHI A-392, NOVEMBER 3, 1974; D) NEW DELHI 6395.

1. WE HAVE RE-CHECKED BOUNDARY DATA APPLICABLE TO THE GOI'S OFFSHORE OIL EXPLORATION AREA VII (WHICH IN PART APPROACHES INDIA'S OFFSHORE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY WITH BANGLADESH) AND HAVE COMPARED THIS INFORMATION WITH MAP PROVIDED BY AMEMBASSY DACCA (TITLED "GEOGRAPHICAL MAP OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF SHOWING SOME GEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE"; SCALE 1:1,000,000; NO DATE). WE ALSO CHECKED AGAIN WITH GOI PETROLEUM MINISTRY TO INQUIRE IF THE GOVERNMENT HAD MODIFIED AREA VII'S EASTERN BOUNDARY IN THE VICINITY OF INDIA'S INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY WITH BANGLADESH SINCE PUBLICATION OF ITS LETTER AND ENCLOSED MAP OF APRIL 16, 1973
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 06722 211729Z

(COPIES PROVIDED AMEMBASSY DACCA, AND OTHERS; REF. B). PETROLEUM

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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MINISTRY SOURCES ASSURE US THAT THE EASTERN BOUNDARY OF AREA VII REMAINS UNCHANGED AND CONFORMS PRECISELY TO ORIGINAL LATITUDE-LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEPICTED ON THEIR MAP, AND AS SUBSEQUENTLY GIVEN TO MINATT IN DESCRIPTIVE FORM (REF C).

2. OUR CURRENT RE-CHECK SUGGESTS THAT AMEMBASSY DACCA'S GEO-GRAPHICAL MAP MAY POSSIBLE REFLECT A PLOTTING ERROR RELATIVE TO INDIA'S OFFSHORE AREA VII. PLEASE NOTE REF. C, ENCL. 2, PAGE 7 (AREA VII, TURNING POINTS 14-18). THE KEY TP'S ARE NUMBER 15 (21 DEGREES 00 MINUTES NORTH-89 DEGREE 10 MINUTES EAST) AND 16 (21 DEGREE 20 MINUTES NORTH-89 DEGREES 10 MINUTES EAST). DACCA'S GEOGRAPHICAL MAP SHOWS THE "BANGLADESH CONTINENTAL SHELF" WESTERN BOUNDARY TO BE A STRAIGHT NORTH-SOUTH LINE BEGINNING (IN THE NORTH) AT 21 DEGREES 20 MINUTES NORTH-89 DEGREES 15 MINUTES EAST AND EXTENDING DUE SOUTH TO 19 DEGREES 00 MINUTES NORTH-89 DEGREES 15 MINUTES EAST, A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 163 MILES. IF THIS LINE IS PLOTTED CORRECTLY, AND IF INDIA'S AREA VII EAST BOUNDARY IS RE-PLOTTED ON DACCA'S MAP ACCORDING TO THE COORDINATES GIVEN ABOVE (AND IN REF. C), THE BANGLADESH WEST BOUNDARY LINE WOULD BE 5 DEGREES EAST OF THE GOI'S AREA VII EASTERN BOUNDARY AT ITS NEAREST POINT. AN "OPEN AREA" OF ABOUT 5-6 MILES THUS APPEARS TOEXIST BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES' DESIGNATED OFFSHORE OIL CONTRACT AREAS.

3. THE SO-CALLED "OPEN AREA" PERTAINS ONLY TO THE GOI'S AREA VII AND THE BANGLADESH OFFSHORE CONTRACT AREA. IT DOES NOT ACCUR-ATELY CONSIDER THE PRECISE LOCATION OF THE (UNDERLIMITED) INTER-NATIONAL BOUNDARY BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH (WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT EXIST WHERE CURRENTLY PLOTTED) AND, IN ANY CASE, A 5-6 MILE GAP IS A TIGHT SQUEEZE DURING SEISMIC SURVEYS. EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT, UNLESS CAUTIONED ACCORDINGLY, OPERATORS OF SEISMIC VESSELS WILL INTENTIONALLY RUN THEIR LINES BEYOND AN AREA BOUNDARY TO ASSURE FULL COVERAGE OF THE AREA UNDER CON-TRACT. SHIP TURN-AROUND DISTANCES ADD FURTHER TO OPERATIONS OUTSIDE A PRESCRIBED CONTRACT AREA. IF THIS IS DONE IN THE VICINITY OF THE INDIA/BANGLADESH BOUNDARY, OVERLAPPING MOVEMENTS INTO THE WRONG COUNTRY MAY BE ANTICIPATED.

4. THE MINATT HAS URGED ALL AMERICAN COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES TO RIGIDLY CONTROL ALL MOVEMENTS OF SEISMIC VESSELS (AND, LATER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 06722 211729Z

DRILL PLATFORMS, SUPPLY SHIPS, HELICOPTERS, ETC.) IN AREAS ADJOINING INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES, AND SPECIFICALLY DISCUSSED THIS MATTER IN DEPTH WITH NATOMAS/CARISBERG/LSG/CROWN REPRESEN-TATIVES IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE SIGNING OF THE GROUP'S BAY OF BENGAL (AREA VII) CONTRACT (REF. D). THEY HAVE ASSURED THIS EMBASSY THAT ALL DUE PRECAUTIONS WILL BE TAKEN TO PREVENT ILLEGAL "WANDERINGS", AND THAT THE GROUP WILL KEEP US INFORMED OF AREAS UNDER ACTIVE SEISMIC SURVEY AND OF DRILL RIG LOCATIONS IN THE

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BAY OF BENGAL. MOYNIHAN

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